

In the Claims:

Please enter the following amended claims 93 and 105:

93. (Once Amended) A method of manufacturing an interconnect, said method comprising steps of:

 forming a first patterned layer of conductive material, said first patterned layer having a trench situated between a first and a second interconnect line;

 depositing a first insulating layer over said first patterned layer, said first insulating layer filling said trench;

 depositing a first hard mask on said first insulating layer;

 forming a first air gap, a second air gap, and a support pillar in said first hard mask and said first insulating layer, said support pillar being situated between said first air gap and said second air gap, said support pillar, said first air gap, and said second air gap being situated in said trench, said support pillar being in contact with said first interconnect line;

 depositing a sealing layer over said first hard mask to seal said first air gap and said second air gap.

105. (Once Amended) A method of manufacturing an interconnect, said method comprising steps of:

forming a first patterned layer of conductive material, said first patterned layer having a trench situated between a first and a second interconnect line;

depositing a first insulating layer over said first patterned layer, said first insulating layer filling said trench;

depositing a second insulating layer over said first insulating layer;

depositing a first hard mask on said second insulating layer;

forming a first air gap, a second air gap, and a support pillar in said first hard mask, said second insulating layer, and said first insulating layer, said support pillar being situated between said first air gap and said second air gap, said support pillar, said first air gap, and said second air gap being situated in said trench, said support pillar being in contact with said first interconnect line;

depositing a sealing layer over said first hard mask to seal said first air gap and said second air gap.